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Pop, Irina

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Ten interviews with traffick victims reveling their THB reality

INTRODUCTION

The Trafficking in human beings represents one of the main threats to the internal security of the European Union and the freedom of its citizens. There is a vast literature on the issue of THB and numerous EU reports with comparative studies that state that the Member States are contributing in a valuable manner to fighting the phenomenon. However the national statistics of the same Member States revealing the THB cases that were prosecuted are very low scarce.

The paper presents the stories of people that were victims of traffic, for labor and sexual purpose. They are our victims. The way that they became THB victims by reaching a point of extreme helplessness by ignoring the language of the host country, by the lack of financial means and by facing the hostility of the local community that constitutes a motive of insecurity which attracts the traffickers, by exploiting the state of poverty and the naivety of the newcomer are structured in 10 interviews.

The joint effort to assist Member States in investigating, prosecuting this crime and encourage cross-border cooperation to bring traffickers to justice. All over Europe a number of measures are being adopted at national level to further enhance knowledge and awareness of THB. The adoption of measures, such as action plans, strategies and programs for enhancement, practical guidelines and recommendations, all to contribute to this goal.

International cooperation between Member States are highly encouraged and Romania is making major efforts to be in compliance with the provision stipulated in the treaties. The correct Cooperation between involved parties in fighting THB can take place on three different levels:

1. the intergovernmental cooperation, stipulated by treaties,
2. The direct cooperation between specialized agencies (Interpol, Europol and national police forces) and can be also - bilateral cooperation of the police forces of two states
3. The cooperation of international NGO's such as La Strada or COADMET . At this level one can also include the media campaign that are design to rise public awareness on the THB phenomenon.

The testimonials that will be presented of the traffick victims for sexual exploitation or labour exploitation are impressive but not unique. The traffick industry is constantly improving its techniques to

avoid the lawenforcements but on the same time keeps some succesful methoths in deling with THB victims.

Our hypotesis are that our 10 THB vctims that were being interviewed do not understand nor do they trust the authorities in fighting THB phenomenon. Our second hypotesis is that international cooperation between Member States, Agecis and NGO's is valuble only when victims presive these entities as resposable to help and protect them from their abusers. The testimonials of the victims might present a different standpoit on the way we understand the fight against THB.

The paper commences with an overview of the casework on THB, the problems encountered, the methodology used in interviewing the victims, their stories and their understandingof the phenomenon and in lasts two sections are described the posibles solutions and the reality of a contry that provides both victims and exploiters.

PROBLEM

Any human person who suffers directly or indirectly physical or moral consequences of a criminal action or inaction, without consciously assuming the risk, therefore without wanting to be one¹. The author Hans von Henting – classifies the victims according to the psychological, biological and social criteria's. He refers to immigrants as a vulnerable group and in one of his points, he states that – they can easily become victims of THB because their status. They reach a point of extreme helplessness by ignoring the language of the host country, by the lack of financial means and by facing and the hostility of the local community that constitutes a motive of insecurity which attracts the traffickers, by exploiting the state of poverty and the naivety of the newcomer. People coming from poor European countries are drawn by the mirage of earning western wages and go and to work abroad without taking any precaution in order not to become a THB victim. The purpose of traffic is very divers ranging from sexual and labor exploitation, to trafficking to commit illegal acts, begging and shops lifting, sham marriage and even trafficking of their own family members the purpose of sexual exploitation.

METHODOLOGY

The interviews that are presented in this paper are traffic victims from the West part of Romania. The victims testimonials are usually difficult to obtain and most of the THB projects findings are based on national and international statistics. The RCMI² Project team managed to interview victims thanks to the staff of Regional Centere of Anti-trafficking Agency that ease the communication between the researchers and the victims. These interviews were conducted by trained staff in a safe environment and, where it was possible, documented on audio tape and paper based.

THB cases can be registered in three sub-categories: THB for the purpose of sexual exploitation, THB for the purpose of labor exploitation and THB for other purposes. The distribution of those cases by percentage is illustrated in the chart below as we have interviewed the victims.

¹ T. Bogdan & colab – *Human behavior in the judicial process* [Comportamentul uman in procesul judiciar]. M I, Serviciul editorial si cinematografic, Bucuresti, 1983, p.93

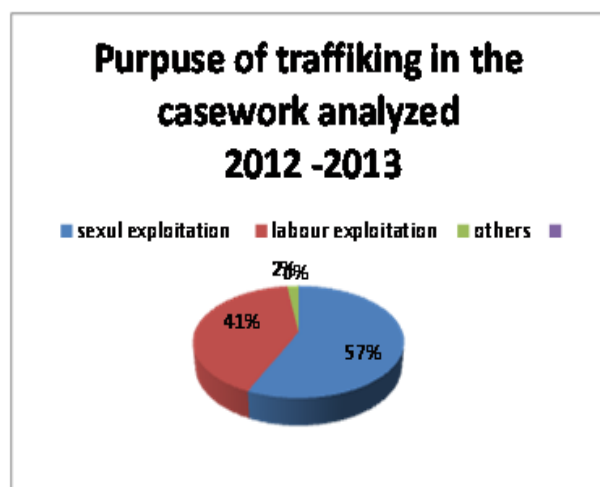
² Research Centre of Identity and Migration Study- the official name of the Romanian team from the Project

CASE ILLUSTRATION

The cases that are to be presented as stated before are numerated as Interview no. 1, 2, 3 etc. in order to protect the victim's identity and these are their testimonials. There were 10 interviews conducted with THB victims, both men and women, trafficked for labor and/or sexual exploitation in the European Union borders. The interviews were conducted in a presence of two officials and two of the team members at the head courter of the Regional Centre of Anti-trafficking Agency. The interview-guide, which can be found in the Appendix, could not be used because of the emotional state of the victims, therefore, the team members decided to have an "undifferentiated" interview structured like an open discussion. The Project Team decided present the testimonials of these victims and their understanding of the phenomenon of THB in their own words³.

Fig. 1 Casework illustration

Interview no.1 was a victim of an internal traffic⁴, for the purpose of sexual exploitation in a city not more than 30 kilometers from her village. This 27 year old woman is vulnerable to traffickers being illiterate and belonging to an extremely poor community. She was abducted from her own bed in the middle of the night by a neighbor and her husband and forced into prostitution.



This case is a very difficult one to prove and the authorities are somewhat resigned with the situation. The victim did not report her traffickers to the Police. She has pointed them out however; the victim might not have the mental capacity to realize what happened to her. During the months that she was forced to become a prostitute, she was drugged, beaten and humiliated yet she does not want to press charges against her abusers

because she is home now. The entire period that she was missing, nobody from her family or community looked for her. The victim escaped from prostitution when her paramour came finally tuck her home from the street.

The story of victim no. 1 is almost identical with story from Iana Matei's book *A vendre. Mariana 15 ans* (2010). The Romanian activist⁵ presents the drama of a 20 years old girl, Miruna⁶, victim of sex trafficking that was kidnapped and force into prostitution no more than 40 kilometers from her village. The similarities between the two cases are impressive; therefore, one can infer that this is a tactic that

³ The complete interviews paper bases or audio based can be found in the archive of RCMI Centre.

⁴ We are using the expression of internal traffic to differentiate the victims that were exploited in their own country, in this case Romania, as oppose to the others that were forced to become prostitutes in the other EU Member States.

⁵ About Iana Matei available on n <http://ianathebook.com/> February 2, 2014

⁶ Iana Matei- *De vanzare Mariana, 15 ani*. Editura RAO, Bucuresti 2011 p.133

was being used by many traffickers and still works especially with naïve, poor and challenged girls as Interview no. 1 and Miruna.

Today our victim, **Interview no. 1**, lives in the same village with the people that exploited her prostitution purposes. In this particular case, although the victim has a special mental condition, she “got away” because her traffickers were inexperienced as well. That leaves the question how can we prevent these things from happening again in a community where she lives next to her abusers? If one country cannot protect its citizens inside the country how exposed are they when they decide to work abroad?

In the next section, we will present a summarized description of the testimonials of THB victim’s that were exploited for sexual or labor purposes outside of Romanian borders. The reasons why these people became vulnerable to traffickers and found it too difficult to admit their condition as victims will be illustrated through their stories.

They all decided to leave Romania to work in foreign country in order to make money and to have a better social standing in the community. Most of them had illegal residence situation in the country of exploitation, and that made them untrusting to report their exploiters. They became vulnerable and THB victims and never learned the official language and they were living in total isolation from the citizens of that particular state. That made the reported cases to be very low one, due to the lack of education of the victims and the limited trust in the responsible authorities.

One of the victims was a young woman of 21 years of age trafficked in France for sexual exploitation mainly, presents a perspective of THB that is horrifying. She represents **Interview no. 2**, as one might see in the chart below.

Trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation	Trafficked for the purpose of labor exploitation
Case no. 1 - 27 years old female <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trafficked in Romania - Extremely poor - Illiterate 	Case no. 10 – 48 years old female <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trafficked in France - Shop lifting - Escapes from prostitution by saying she is pregnant
Case no. 2 – 21 years old female <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trafficked in France - Large family - Minimal education - has apprised charges against her abusers - Evidence of good international judicial cooperation - NGO’s implicated involved in her “salvation” 	Case no. 6 – 22 years old male <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trafficked in the Czech Republic by a large criminal organization - He was “sold” 2 times - Has a large family, 10 brothers and sisters

<p>Case no. 3 – 22 years old female</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trafficked in France - Extended family - Beaten so hard that she remained with a physical handicap - will needs psychological and medical assistance all her life 	<p>Case no. 5 - 17 years old female</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trafficked in the Czech Republic along with her older brother - Had some financial benefits - Afraid to report her abusers because she was 17.
<p>Case no. 8 – 53 years old female</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Runs away from Germany and from her own son that wants her to prostitute herself - Difficulties in understanding her drama, therefore pressing charges against her abuser. 	<p>Case no. 4 - 58 years old male</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trafficked in Spain - The criminal network gather workers from 3 Romanian cities - The traffickers were using digital fingerprints to serve as signature
<p>Case no. 9 – 28 years old female</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Almost trafficked in Germany by her own brother - Runs away and the German Red Cross salved her and her mother and payee for their train ticket from Germany to Arad 	<p>Case no. 7 – 56 years old male</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trafficked in Spain by a trafficker that contacted his victims through a local newspaper ad - After 5 months work came back home with 50 Euros

Fig. 2 Case illustration of RCMi's interviews

Case **no.2** illustrates real proofs of trafficking for sexual exploitation and forced labor, abuse and abduction. The testimonial of this victim is proven to be also a case of witnessing good international cooperation between institutions from Romania and France.

The victim was 21 one at the time, she comes from a large family of 8 brothers and sisters therefore, the mirage of the western earning were very appealing. She was told that she will be working as a maid in Paris, but ended up as a prostitute. One might argue that the minimal education and the naivety of the poorly educated people is one of the major causes of becoming a THB victim. In many of the THB cases that is true and also for this particular one, the victim went to school just for three years, but there is another factor that should be taken into consideration: the victims know their trafficker⁷.

Interview **no.2** reveals the fact that the victim went to France with an acquaintance of her and her family unseeing read the signs. Her housing and travel arrangements were paid by this acquaintance's husband, whom was running a small OCG from his house in Paris. He was controlling a group of 3 girls

⁷ See Iana Matei *De vanzare Mariana, 15 ani*. Editura RAO, Bucuresti 2011 pp.145-153

from Romania into prostitution by violent means, frequently using kidnapping, fraud, aggression, threats and rape. The trafficker had double citizenship Romanian and French and was helped by his wife and mother-in-law from Romania to attract young girls with the promise of a good job in France.

The victim declares that she felt welcomed the first night in the trafficker's house being surrounded by his family, a small baby and his wife, an older woman and another girl that seem a little slow. The next day she was told that he must recover his investment that paid for her and the older lady's transport to France. She and the other two women were forced to practice prostitution. Sometimes they will "serve" up to 20-30 clients per night while the trafficker was waiting to in the car.

The victim accepted her situation as a prostitute and sometimes she would keep some money for herself in order to run someday even though her documents were confiscated the first day in France. During the day, she was forced to steal from groceries stores along with the trafficker's wife. They would make sure that victims will not run so, they would resort to force. The victims stated that one evening she was raped and beaten by gun point by the trafficker while his was at the Post Office. Another method that he used was to force the women to beat one another. The victim had to beat the other woman with the extension cord from the washing machine because the French Police caught her while prostituting.

The trafficker was so convincing with his methods that the three women that he had working for him did not dare to report him, although the victim intentionally allowed herself to be caught while shoplifting. She says that she wanted to be arrested to get away from her exploiter but the Police released her after a few hours. The French Police asked her if she is forced into prostitution but she did not say anything and then the Policeman threaten her that if she does not admit her crimes he will cut her hair. Eventually they let her go because crime was not serious enough to arrest her. She declares that she urged them to let her stay there in the Police Station without convincing them because she knew he was waiting outside.

The second time she was arrested by the Police she was prostituting herself. This time she plans her escape. She managed to hide some money from the trafficker, less than 45 Euro, which she buried in a plastic bag. The victim decided to run because the other woman that she was with, said she will go back to Romania and the trafficker will take the other two in United States or United Kingdom⁸. She decided that is time to escape. She was kept in the Police Station with no translator for more than 2 hours. The trafficker was waiting for her outside the Police Station; she knew that if she goes back she will be punished for being caught. The victim recalls a similar situation where the other the other girl was interrogated by the Police and when she came "home" the trafficker forced the other two to beat her in order to teach her a lesson. She recalls that the same as last time she was released after a few hours. This time she got out through the back door and run out in the streets. She met a Romanian beggar that told her that if she will stay with him in a few hours a man will bring them food. She recalls that the old man said everyday at 6 o'clock a NGO representative comes and serve food and take homeless people to shelter for the night. From that point on, her story was heard by the proper authorities the NGO took her to a "safe house", the French and Romanian authorities collaborated in solving this case of THB, and the victim managed to come back to home. She is being comforted by trained psychologists so that she may re-

⁸ The victim does not know the difference between the two countries.

integrate in the society, and she is making great progress but her family and friends do not know she was a THB victim.

The thing that is very interesting is that the victim turn for help and trusted not the authorities but the “illegals” from the streets of Paris who give her compaction and advices how to solve her problems. The national and international cooperation between the parties involved in fighting THB turned up to be very good in the end, although, at the first level the collaboration of the victim and the authorities is still problematic.

Interview no.4 was a male victim of 58 years old that was trafficked for forced labor in Spain along with his friend that we interviewed as case **no.7**. Both of the victims decided to go and work abroad after reading a newspaper ad that advertised for jobs in agriculture. One of the men had some experience after working one summer in Spain. Unfortunately for them this experience was a very different one. They found out that the person that was posting ads in the news paper was part of a criminal network gathering workers from two other cities from Romania to work abroad. They traveled from Romania by bus along with other workers for about 250 kilometers and then they changed cars because the first one got broken. In order to pay for that second minibus they had to give up all their money and passports. After being robbed of their passports were taken directly on the plantations that they were meant to work. They were commission to pick oranges for 12 hours every day and living in terrible conditions in barracks situated in the field. There was no running water and the victims along with other dozens workers were paid once a week by the Spanish owner of the plantation. They got paid very little money barely to survive in order to buy food and water because the Spanish employer gives them unreachable targets. Although they were working 12 hours a day when the weather was fine, they could never pick enough oranges and sometimes they had to ask their family to send them money in order to survive.

At the end of the summer one of the victim, **interview no. 4**, decided to ask for money from his relatives in Romania in order to come back home. The Spanish employer agrees and lets him go back. The victim does not realize that he was trafficked; he believes that he was just unlucky with the job.

The other one, **interview no.7**, does not want to admit that he did not succeed in earning money from this seasonal job, therefore he stays and takes another job in picking olives in different region of Spain. He comes back home after 5 months with 50 Euros yet both of victims say that they would leave again if an opportunity arise.

There two interviews show that like many middle age men that are having difficulties in finding work in Romania and are willing to pack their bags the next day to work abroad after reading an newspaper add. The two men that we have interviewed have obtained some an economic benefit⁹ from their activity making the act of THB difficult to prove and to acknowledge that they been the victim of traffic. The victims have reluctance to reveal themselves and their abusers; therefore, THB reported cases are not that many. The traffickers in this particular case were considered somehow fair giving workers the possibility in theory, to work and earn as much money as they can. The two men, **interview no. 4** and **interview no. 7** had a contract that they sign even though they did not understand the language. The method that the Spanish employer used to sign those contracts was also very interesting, meaning that he was using digital fingerprints to serve as signature. All these facts, one might interpretive as being

⁹ Weekly salary or the profit of 50 Euro after 5 months

very progressive for the traffickers whereas the authorities are left with reluctance from the victims, bureaucratic difficulties and outdated techniques.

Other THB victims of forced labor that we interviewed were the cases of a brother and sister trafficked in the Czech Republic, **interview no. 5** and **interview no. 6**. The two siblings come from a large family of 10 brothers and sisters and decided to work abroad after failing to get a job in Romania. The victims knew the trafficker that promises them good jobs in Czech Republic. They were reluctant to report their traffickers because they did not consider it to be important.

They left Romania with a minibus along with 8 other Romanians and when they got to their destination in Prague were divided into two groups: women and men and “sold” to a Ukrainian man, as they declared. Their passport and contracts that they have signed although they did not understand the language were taken by this Ukrainian employer for safe keeping. The men were separated by the women and sent to work in constructions.

The girl, **interview no. 5**, was working 10 hours a day in a meat processing factory and she was paid a weekly “salary”¹⁰ in order to buy food. **Interview no. 6**, her brother, was working in constructions for the same Czech employer and the Ukrainian guy was the middleman for both the women and the men since he spoke Czech and Romanian as well. The accommodation that was provided for them was different for the men and the women. **Interview no. 6** says that he was sharing a basement with bars at the windows with other 25 people of different nationalities: Ukrainians, Vietnamese and Romanians and no bathroom. They were working from 7 o’clock a.m. to 7 o’clock p.m. every day for 6 weeks. The Vietnamese were working at the meat factory and had money for food that was often stolen by the construction workers. He recalls that one time, he and the other workers were abandoned on the construction site for three weeks with no money or food. They complained to the Czech employer but he said that they should talk to the Ukrainian guy. The workers from the factory were never paid as well, other than the money for food. At one point, all the workers decided to go for strike and were protesting in the factory yard, the Ukrainian trafficker was arguing with the Czech employer over the salaries of the workers. The Czech employer argues that he sends all money for the workers in bank account and the Ukrainian man had to give them to the workers. After a very tense discussion, the Czech employer left the factory and the Ukrainian guy told the workers that the employer will not be paid them but he advises them not to go back to their home countries if they ever want to recover their paychecks. He promises new jobs to a different Czech employer in a toy factory. The two brothers were separated again when the boy, **interview no. 6**, decides he wants to go back home, whereas his sister continues her “collaboration” with the Ukrainian trafficker in the toy factory for another two weeks. She gets back home only when her uncle calls the Romanian guy that took them to Czech Republic and sold them to Ukrainian, and says that he will report them to the Police unless she is brought home.

The brother manages to get back home with 2000 coronas, the food money for one week, and he is happy, although, the ticket was 1200 coronas. The girl comes home two weeks later with the same minibus and driver that took her to Czech Republic, the Romanian guy, who was the driver and the first provider of Romanian workers for this small criminal organization. Neither of the brothers reported their abusers to the Police; their story became part of a THB investigation only after the authorities

¹⁰ 2000 coronas / week equals about 70 Euros

identified Romanians that were trafficked and their names came up. They say that they did not report their abusers because they got home ok and free of charge. Both **interview no. 5** and **6** say that they would consider go for work abroad in the nearby future.

Listening to THB stories one can ask them self how can the responsible authorities can prevent these things for happening again? How can people that you know turn into traffickers of human beings? The next two interviews were very impressive due to the special situation that the two women were presenting. **Interview no.8** and **interview no.9** could have been two cases of traffic in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation in Germany. They were not trafficked because they manage to run away. The good thing is that they did not become victims, although, not having the “THB victim” background; there were few organizations that could help and assist them. If they would not run away, they would have become victims for sexual exploitation. The two women are mother and daughter, and they went to Germany to find work and visit a family member near Munich. They were encouraged to live their village and come to Germany to work by her own son/brother. He payee for bus ticket to Munich for the two women and host them at his house. After only a few days he told them that they should work in order to reimburse him for transportation and accommodation and they should become prostitutes. The two women mange to run away but they did not have any money. They spend two nights in a train station hoping that they will get back to Romania. They had no money, they were in foreign country without knowing the language and their status was not of “victims of traffic” for an NGO to assist and advise them. Eventually they manage to get in touch with Red Cross Germany, the non-profit organization that was able to buy them a train ticket to Romania. They arrived in Arad but they could not travel further. Their village was situated 600 kilometers from the city where they arrived, finally a passenger offered and to pay for their train tickets to Iasi in order for them to be home. Because of the status “almost THB victims” they were not able to get in the system of assistance by NGO’s or the responsible authorities. This case proves, we believe, that in spite of the excellent cooperation between the authorities and the NGO’s, the THB legislation national and international has to improved all the time to prevent situation like the one presented above.

Interview no.10 was 48 years old woman that traveled along with the victim presented before as **interview no.2**, to France. She was also trafficked for sexual exploitation purposes but she gets away by saying to the possible “costumers” that she is pregnant. The trafficker decides that she will work for that point on as a baby sitter for his own baby and during the day she will go shop lifting along with the other girls and his wife. He is keeping her for several months until he lets her go back home to her village. She does not considered herself to have been a victim of traffic in human beings necessarily. She believes she was lucky; the traffickers have treated her fair enough, since was not beaten and eventually free from to come back. She declares that she would go back to work abroad but not for the same man, that although, he is being investigated by the French police, he is still recruiting naïve people from her village to go to work in France.

All these testimonials show the naivety and the desperation of people that are so poor or so eager to earn European wages that they would sign anything and go anywhere. The authorities involved in fighting THB encounter many difficulties starting from police forces, judicial authorities and NGO’s that

all have to work together. The process is very long in time and sometimes the victims change or withdraw their statements. There has been significant progress in judicial cooperation between Member States in the recent years, but still different national legislation is a challenge for the authorities in fighting THB phenomenon. Prosecutors and investigators gather and share information in order to condemn these crimes but they encounter different problems like: difficulties in conducting joint investigations, due to different stages or extent of connected investigations and prosecutions' lack of coordination of parallel investigations and difficulties in identifying the victims. The interviews that were presented above were identified as victims due to the joint investigation and good expertise of the police forces yet the perception of these entities as responsible to help and protect is to be awaited.

The future of THB Cases. A pre-conclusion

Romania existed on a "THB map" as a **provider** of THB victims that would send its „people" to work towards more civilized and richer countries of the EU. Today Romania is not a richer country nor has it stop providing Europe with THB victims but it became an **location** for THB both work exploitation and sexual exploitation. If one looks at the constant development of the techniques of traffickers were as the judicial and police authorities use the same technology being understaffed and on the constant political change with budget cuts, the fight against THB is an unfair one driven only by passion and the need seeking justice for the helpless ones.

In a precedent international Project that was studying the Eurojust's action in fighting traffic in human beings, the findings of the interviews to the authorities that were asked to indicate the most common source countries of THB cases affecting their jurisdiction show Romania as the main provider of THB victims for EU countries. As one can see the chart below summarizes source countries of THB victims as indicated in the study¹¹:

Contry	Times mentioned	Country	Times mentioned
Romania	16	Nepal	1
Nigeria	13	Ireland	1
Bulgaria	9	Ecuador	1
China	8	Algeria	1
Ukraine	7	Mongolia	1
Russia	6	Bosnia & Herzegovina	1
Brazil	4	Serbia	1
Vietnam	4	Egypt	1
Albania	3	Syria	1
Thailand	3	Dominican Republic	1
Hungary	3	Bangladesh	1

¹¹ Source – The figure is taken from the - *Strategic Project on Eurojust's action against trafficking in human beings*. Available at > <http://eurojust.europa.eu/doclibrary/Eurojust-framework/Casework/Eurojust%20action%20against%20trafficking%20in%20human%20beings%2028October%202012%29/THB-report-2012-10-18-EN.pdf> December 2, 2103

Belarus	3	Sri Lanka	1
Estonia	3	Ethiopia	1
India	2	Slovakia	1
Morocco	2	Iraq	1
Poland	2	Afghanistan	1
Lithuania	2	Paraguay	1
Moldova	2	Czech Republic	1
Philippines	2	Slovenia	1
Cameroon	2	Turkey	1
South Africa	1	Pakistan	1

Fig. 4 . The most common source countries of THB cases affecting their jurisdiction¹²

Romania is mentioned by the interviewed authorities as the top provider of THB victims for the Western countries.

The **modus operandi** used in sexual exploitation is furthermore gradually shifting from activities taking place in public settings (street prostitution), to more concealed forms such as escort services, private housings and striptease parlours, private clubs and massage parlours. Romania became a favorite destination for foreigners that are direct benefices of these types of services, even the transporters (airlines and taxis) are unwillingly/unknowingly contributing to this new phenomenon of THB with a more legal curtain.

As far as work exportation goes, the traffickers take advantage of the economic situation in the country of origin, and act on two directions. The first one is the “traditional” way of trafficking, taking Romanians and exploits them in other EU Member States, a method that still is very much in used. The other way it is newer and it comes as a response to the changing climate/ environment of Romania, from a **sender** country of cheap labor force vulnerable to traffickers to a **receiver** country non-Europeans. These two ways of exploiting workers coexist and the phenomenon of THB is growing, Romania is still a one of the main providers of trafficked people in Europe but it became also one of the countries of destination of traffickers. There are multiple journalistic investigations¹³ that have revealed work exploration of Vietnamese’s or African’s working and sleeping in factories build in Romania without anybody knowing about these THB cases happening.

¹² Source – The figure is taken from the - *Strategic Project on Eurojust’s action against trafficking in human beings*. Available at > <http://eurojust.europa.eu/doclibrary/Eurojust-framework/Casework/Eurojust%20action%20against%20trafficking%20in%20human%20beings%20%28October%202012%29/THB-report-2012-10-18-EN.pdf> December 2, 2103

¹³ Ioan Laza - *The trafficking in human beings reflected in the media (2014)*

CONCLUSIONS

Trafficking of human beings is a crime punishable by the national and international legislation. People of ages and genders, especially those coming from the Eastern block are very vulnerable to traffickers because of the "mirage" of the western way of living.

The victims - have actually obtained an economic benefit from their activity making the act of THB difficult to prove and to acknowledge that they been the victim of traffic. THB victims are often difficult to identify due to their reluctance to reveal themselves and their abusers that are in some cases part of their family. As one might observe analyzing the testimonials of the victims, the problem of moral and human dignity is to be discussed. Although, before reaching that level, the economical factors are to be considered. These are the factors that drove all the victims in taking that risk to travel for work in a different country. A regular person might say that the moment when somebody offered to pay for somebody else's accommodation and transport to a foreign country should have raised some questions about the motive. Unfortunately the answer to all this is too simple.

In Romania, people are so poor that everything that matters is the financial earnings. One might talk about morality but when you are poor you do not have that luxury of asking yourself about morals. The victims that were interviewed have declared that being trafficked is not so much as an infamy as being extorted. "I've been cheated! They took the money that I've made"

Nevertheless, the question that states whether victims understand the phenomenon of THB is not worth asking. Romania like many others ex-communists states, is consumerism orientated where the only dimension that counts is ensuring financial means for yourself and your family and that makes it all right to be a trafficked. The responses of the victims to the question of "Would you go back... even though you were trafficked?" were 9 out of 10 affirmative. In the book *A vendre. Mariana 15 ans*, the famous Romanian activist presents the stories of the girls that she "kidnapped" from traffickers and the challenges that she encountered, among them the refuse of some girls to be reintegrating that lead to becoming THB victims again¹⁴. We can address the problem of THB through educational programs with the support of mass media, better juridical cooperation of the Member states but the poverty still remains and vulnerable population will be trafficked hopefully less than before¹⁵.

The THB phenomenon is very complex and the possible solutions rise long ahead; therefore we should not be surprised by the responses of the victims in characterizing their trauma. The replies of the THB victims in December 2012 showed that the most significant impulse of made them accept their condition as victims and would do it again are the possible financial earnings. Romania has worked very hard to be in compliance with the international legislation¹⁶ regarding THB and applying EU Directive

¹⁴ See Iana Matei *De vanzare Mariana, 15 ani*. Editura RAO, Bucuresti 2011 pp.109-135

¹⁵ Ibid pp. pp.199- 219

¹⁶ The Law no. 678/2001 on the prevention and combat of trafficking in human beings stipulates both for traffickers of people for sexual exploitation and for traffickers of people for forced labor exploitation, the following penalties: **Art. 12**

Whoever recruits, transports, transfers, harbors or receives a person, through the use of threats or violence or the use of other forms of coercion, through kidnapping, fraud or misrepresentation, abuse of power or by taking

36/2011 and 20/2012 with condemn trafficking in human beings. The area where there are many things to be improved in country that is also a source, a transit and in the recent years a destination state for the THB victims, represents the financial aspect. Romania has not been able to find the financial means to properly help the NGO's in the reintegration of THB victims. Multidisciplinary approaches to the fight THB are being used and Romanian law enforcement have been acknowledged as good specialists by their fellow colleagues. Some Member States invite Romanians experts to participate in their programs recognizing the importance of the international dimension of THB in their training activities¹⁷. Increasing inter-institutional international and national cooperation of working groups and governmental agencies. In order for the social welfare or immigration authorities to be active and involved it is needed a better cooperation between civil society and NGO's in assisting THB victims, and the governmental authorities.

The real dimension of the problem remains unknown due to the denial of the problem on the level of society. That denial translates in resulting a large number of THB cases that remain unrecorded. The consequence is the lack of proper knowledge in interpreting elements of THB, including the way traffickers lure their victims from their own circle of acquaintances and even family members.

The complex multilateral dimension of THB cases is obviously for any person that knows the difficulties of public policy process making. The authorities involved in THB cases identify the main obstacles that they are facing in investigating and prosecuting cases are as follows: poor funding, under staff, difficulties in exchanging evidence between jurisdictions, different legislations, and victims' testimonials. All the parties involved recognize the challenge that is presented by identifying and solving THB cases and are working together in order to raise awareness about this problem. Romania is making great effort to improve judicial cooperation between EU and non EU –states. The traffickers and victims profile are changing, therefore new forms of exploitation are developed with the acceptance of the victim, and Romania is changing as well from a source to transit to destination country, all three existing in the same time.

advantage of that person's inability to defend him/herself or to express his/her will or by offering, giving, accepting or receiving money or other benefits in order to obtain the agreement of a person who has control over another person with the intent of exploiting the latter, commits the crime of trafficking in human beings and shall be punished with 3 to 12 years imprisonment and interdiction of certain rights.

¹⁷ Romanian police experts are invited to assist their colleagues in THB investigations in countries like France, Italy or Norway.

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